

Dennis the Menace



"DAD! THIS GUY'S ON HIS VACATION, TOO!"

Small Worlds Around Us

By LYNN M. WATKINS

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Pioneers Did Pretty Well in Early Attempts at Medicine

It is not practiced much any more, but the time was, and not many years ago, when people believed in the so-called doctrine of signature.

That was back in the days when there was no corner drug store and the doctor was many miles away. There were no telephones or good roads. If anyone in the family became sick, it was only the pioneer housewife herself who could administer medicines, and her only course of supply was the woods and fields, her own garden, and the doctrine of signature.

The fact that those pioneers retained a measure of good health, and survived to beget the numerous generations which followed indicates pretty conclusively that this doctrine and bark, roots, berries and fruits most certainly had some curative effects.

What It Means

This peculiar sounding phrase and its application had to do with those plants whose leaves, fruits, bark, berries or flowers resembled in shape some organ of the human body. For instance, those plants which had heart-shaped leaves were supposed to be helpful in the treatment of conditions of the heart.

Belief in this proposition was known as doctrine of signatures. And in this same department, a plant called heartease, which we now call the pansy, was used in emotional affairs of the heart in England a few generations ago. A concoction of the leaves, steeped in water was given to a young lady to cure the pangs of love. Although we are more philosophical today, we still use "digitalis" for heart trouble, and it came, and still does, from a common garden plant we call the foxglove.

And back when the doctrine of signature was so seriously believed in, those plants with kidney-shaped leaves supposedly yielded themselves favorably to treatment of those organs. There are of course, leaves shaped like feet, hands, ears, nose and just about anything we want to liken them to.

Figuring out how to use, or what part of the plant yielded the proper curative, was something else again, but even then most people knew that leaves had more different component parts and elements than did the roots or the fruit.

Did Pretty Well

But with what sketchy knowledge our forefathers

'Stubborn' FDA Assistant Credited With Preventing Infant Deformities

Editor's note: This is the story of a woman who refused to let criticism sway her doubts about a new drug. Her refusal to approve its sale in the United States may have prevented thousands of babies from being born with deformities.

BY LEON BURNETT

Washington—Dr. Frances Oldham Kelsey of the Food and Drug Administration has been called a stubborn woman. She also has been called an unreasonable bureaucrat.

But Assistant FDA Commissioner Winton B. Rankin says the American public owes her a vote of thanks for that stubbornness.

Rankin confirmed that Dr. Kelsey may have prevented "an American tragedy" by her steadfast refusal to allow the marketing in this country of a sleeping pill later linked to grotesque deformities in newborn children.

The 47-year-old drug specialist withstood a barrage of criticism before a medical investigation eventually proved that her suspicions were well-founded.

The story, which was related by the Washington Post, involves a drug with the chemical name thalidomide and a rare type of birth defect known as phocomelia.

West German Development

Thalidomide was developed in 1954 by a West German firm but was discarded because it showed no effect on test animals. In 1958 another German firm found that it promised to be the best sleep-inducer ever—no hangover, no danger in overdosage.

Under the trade name of

had, and the Indians before them, they did pretty well at that. They even found that the mourning bride, or pin-cushion flower, was a pretty effective remedy for the itch, and the flower was named scabious; and itch is what the word means.

Today with the prevalence of bathtubs and shower stalls, and a consciousness of the value of cleanliness, scabious is raised only because it is a pretty flower to grow in a garden. About then, too, the blossom of the chrysanthemum was rubbed on fretful children who then always seemed to relax and drop peacefully to sleep. It was thought that something in the plant soothed the child, but now we know, and reluctantly admit, that the poor little thing was suffering from body lice and the natural insecticide in the chrysanthemum blossoms killed the lice and the thankful child was able to rest.

Contergan the drug found a booming market in West Germany. It was sold in Britain as Distaval, in Portugal as Softenon, and in Canada as Talimol.

In September 1960 the William S. Merrell Co. of Cincinnati asked the FDA for clearance to market the compound in the United States. The thalidomide application became the first assignment for Dr. Kelsey who had just joined FDA.

Along with the application came data claiming the drug to be safe for use. But Dr. Kelsey was not convinced. She repeatedly refused to approve the drug and her superiors backed her up.

Dr. Kelsey says there were insinuations that she was a hair-splitter, an unreasonable bureaucrat—that she was stupid. But she refused to budge from her position.

Affliction Becomes Common

In 1961 West Germany found itself confronted by a vexing medical problem. Phocomelia, an affliction so rare that some medical dictionaries do not even list it, was becoming all too common.

Ordinarily, a victim of phocomelia is missing one arm and small rudimentary fingers grow from the stub. But the cases in Germany

were worse. Some infants were born with both arms or legs missing, others with three limbs and a few with none at all.

A variety of possible causes, from heredity to radioactive fallout, were considered and discarded. Then last November Dr. Widukind Lenz, a Hamburg pediatrician, conducted a study which showed that about 20 per cent of the mothers of deformed infants whom he treated had taken thalidomide. After further in-

vestigation, he found the rate went up to 50 per cent.

The drug was found to be dangerous to the unborn within 20 to 40 days after conception. During this period, Dr. Lenz believes, the chances are at least two in five that the baby will be affected.

Removed From Market

Thalidomide was removed from the market in Germany and elsewhere. But it is estimated that by the end of August the number of deformed

children born in West Germany will be between 3,500 and 6,000. One of three is expected to die.

Dr. Kelsey, wife of another pharmacologist, F. Ellis Kelsey, special assistant to the surgeon general, and the mother of two daughters, 15 and 12, had this to say about her role in keeping the drug off the American market:

"They certainly thought I was unreasonable. But I did not feel the material to back it up was very adequate."

"The company was very anxious to get the stuff on the market, but this was routine."

The whole general tenor of the criticism, of her "was sort of a 'stubbornness,'" she said.

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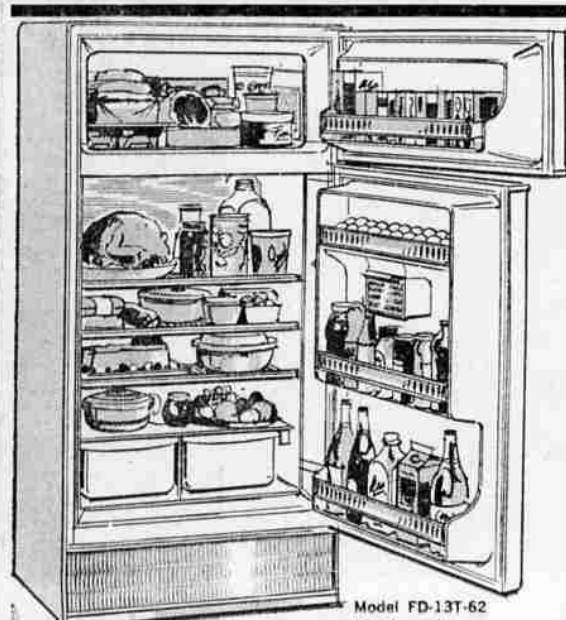
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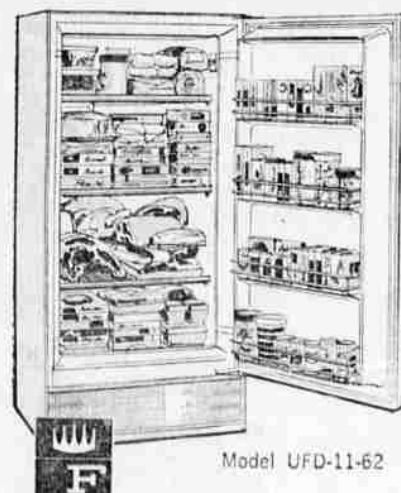
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Veterans Entitled To Former Jobs

With the impending release of reservists and National Guardsmen called to active duty during the Berlin crisis, employers and labor organizations today were reminded of the reemployment provisions of the Universal Military Training and Service Act.

Persons who left their jobs to serve the country during this emergency are entitled under the law to be restored to their former position without loss of seniority, status, or rate of pay, according to the bureau of veterans reemployment rights, U.S. Department of Labor.

The act gives veterans protection of their civilian job rights for up to four years of military service. Because many had already served four years during the Korean crisis, the act was amended last October to protect the rights of reservists and guardsmen recalled to duty in the recent military buildup. Under the amendment those reentering the military after Aug. 1, 1961, will not have their prior service counted in the four-year period.